

**House Higher Education Committee
Request for Information
UTMB Galveston
301 University Boulevard
Galveston, TX 77555
Submitted by: Lauren Sheer
lesheer@utmb.edu
512-609-8046**

The Committee seeks the following information related to the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. Are institutions of higher education ensuring the health and safety of students, faculty and staff during the 2020 Fall Semester? When applicable, please speak directly to classroom and lab settings, dormitories and dining halls.

UTMB has developed a COVID-19 website for students, staff, and patients. Much of the following information resides on the UTMB COVID 19 Website: <https://www.utmb.edu/covid-19>

General guidelines include:

- Everyone on campus must wear a mask at all times while in public spaces, including hallways, waiting rooms, breakrooms, copy rooms, restrooms, and elevators.
- Remember to remain at least 6 feet apart.
- No more than two (2) people in an office at a time for meetings; no more than four or five people in small conference rooms—do not sit directly across from or adjacent to another person.
- Large conference rooms and auditoriums may accommodate no more than 25% of their capacity; avoid activities involving more than ten people at a time, if possible.
- Avoid any activity that encourages congregation of persons.
- Cubicles should be spaced so that no one is on either side or directly across from someone else (limit two cubicles per four-person office).
- Housekeeping has increased service in public areas including frequent touchpoints, such as elevators buttons, seating areas, etc.; however, employees should take responsibility for routinely cleaning surfaces in their own office space and common areas (i.e., desks, keyboards, tables, etc.).
- Hand washing: Wet hands before dispensing soap; work up a lather and cover all surfaces of hands, including fingertips, between fingers, palms and back of hands for twenty (20) seconds.
- Reduced capacity at the alumni fieldhouse (UTMB gym).
- Screened all students and are testing symptomatic and exposed students per CDC guidelines. We are planning to implement a randomized testing program to look for disease prevalence starting in September.
- Daily attestation (self health screening) required for all faculty, staff and students.
- Providing disinfectant in spray bottles in labs and classrooms so they can be cleaned by students/faculty between classes.
- Designated entrances/exits in select campus buildings to reduce student interactions.
- For students on clinical rotations/experiences, provide specialized personalized protective equipment (PPE), such as N95 masks or clear face shields, if required by the clinical facility.

- Free testing offered to all employees and students, symptomatic and asymptomatic. Testing can be self-scheduled.

2. What plans are in place for on-campus COVID-19 testing? Do institutions have the capacity to provide testing on campus, both in terms of available supplies and labs to process tests?

- UTMB's labs (clinical and Galveston National Lab) have the capacity to process 4,000 COVID-19 tests per day for patients, staff, students, and our community. Student Health has been performing COVID-19 PCR free tests for three months for symptomatic and asymptomatic exposure based on CDC Guidelines. At present, we do not anticipate any issues with supplies or testing capacity.

3. If applicable, what are plans for collegiate athletics this Fall? How will student athletes be kept safe? If fans will be permitted to attend events, how will fans be kept safe?

- UTMB does not feature athletics.

4. What do projected enrollment figures and formula funding look like to institutions for this school year?

- At this time, UTMB is not expecting a significant reduction in enrollment for the fall semester. The formula is set by the legislature and is driven by enrollment, so if enrollment holds relatively stable, so should the funding derived from the formula.

5. Has there been a noticeable impact on staff or faculty retention with regard to concerns about the pandemic?

- UTMB Human Resources tracks retention on a monthly basis and has not seen a negative impact due to COVID-19. Retention figures for the institution have demonstrated a slight upward trend since December.

6. Health Related Institutions were exempt from the 5% budget cuts earlier this year, due to their important role in resolving the public health crisis. What are some of the programs, research, and responses to the pandemic that our Health Related Institutions have contributed?

UTMB greatly appreciates the exemption granted to Health Related Institutions from current-biennium reductions necessitated by COVID-19. UTMB is currently facing its own shortfall due to lost patient care revenue and increased expenses associated with our pandemic response. The exemption from the FY2020/2021 reductions spared UTMB from having to make additional cuts to essential services and has allowed UTMB to continue its aggressive response to this crisis.

Perhaps the most significant emerging health threat of our lifetimes, the COVID-19 global pandemic has tested our state, nation and world. With unparalleled infectious disease expertise, UTMB has taken a leading role in combatting this new foe.

- Scientists in UTMB's Galveston National Laboratory (GNL)—the only national laboratory in Texas and one of only two fully-functional biosafety level 4 (BSL4) labs at a U.S. university—were among the first in the US to receive samples of the virus for study.
- Working with UTMB's clinical laboratory experts, the GNL quickly developed robust testing capacity. As of August 19, UTMB's clinical and GNL lab had completed 175,000 viral tests on behalf of its patients, county health departments, nursing homes, TMC partners, Texas Department of Emergency Management, TDCJ and others. Samples have come from more than 166 Texas counties.
- A UTMB team created a reverse genetic system that enhances researchers' ability to quickly develop and evaluate potential vaccines, diagnose infected patients and explore how this virus—and others that are sure to follow—are evolving. Researchers also have developed a new assay test that will more quickly and accurately judge how well a COVID-19 vaccine is working in people, potentially significantly reducing the time required to deploy a life-saving vaccine to the public. In support of their caregiver colleagues, they developed a method to sanitize N95 respirators to ensure an adequate supply of this essential protective equipment.
- As of August 24, 69 UTMB grant applications related to COVID-19 research have been funded for \$26 million. Philanthropies, area businesses and individuals have contributed an additional \$7.2 million in cash and in-kind gifts.
- Clinically, UTMB rapidly transformed its outpatient services to provide care in a safe manner for employees and patients—creating dedicated testing sites, standing up telehealth capability in one weekend and implementing enhanced safety protocols for in-person visits. UTMB hospitals planned for additional capacity for a predicted surge in patients; as of August 19, UTMB has cared for 1,754 COVID-positive patients in its hospitals, with 1,468 being discharged home. The university has also worked with community groups to help educate residents about how to prevent COVID's spread in our region.
- To keep students and faculty safe, UTMB's Academic Enterprise converted 100 percent of courses to online-only during the spring and summer, ensuring students stayed on track and those completing their programs could graduate on time.
- UTMB promptly published guidelines on PPE and rooming patients in our health system. In addition, testing protocols were established, with two separate test orders, COVID-19 Rapid Test and a COVID-19 PCR Molecular Test. UTMB also established limits on visitation and processes and procedures for arriving and undergoing clinical procedures. UTMB established special urgent care clinics (Tier 1) to provide evaluation and testing of patients meeting criteria for possible COVID-19. These clinics provided ready access to our patients and maintained separation of our well (non-COVID suspect) and sick (COVID suspect) patients for safety of patients and staff. Finally, the University published comprehensive health care worker safety protocols.
<https://www.utmb.edu/covid-19/patients>
- UTMB conducted several virtual workshops to orient the research community and facilitate learning and discussion around critical research questions related to COVID-19 pandemic. Research Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines were established and periodically reviewed and updated.
<https://www.utmb.edu/research/covid-19-research/covid-19-research-updates>
- UTMB has worked closely with and has provided "Update on COVID" programs to Chambers of Commerce in Galveston and neighboring counties, various ISDs in Galveston and other counties, and "lunch and learn" programs to health community health providers address the challenges of COVID-19 in their patients.

- For our community, UTMB conducted communications and presentations to inform the public about the novel corona virus, disease spread, testing availability and quarantine requirements. <https://www.utmb.edu/covid-19/home/sick-exposed/patients>
- A post-COVID-19 clinic and rehabilitation program has been created and is being enhanced as UTMB gains experience and determines the needs of patients being seen.

7. How have state and federal COVID-19-related funds already impacted budgets?

UTMB's response has helped our community and the State but not without additional costs.

- As of mid-August, UTMB is projecting a total of \$153.3M in COVID-19 related expenses and decreased revenue, prior to estimated reimbursements. Once offset by \$73.8M in other funds (i.e. potential FEMA and CARES), UTMB is projecting a total loss of \$79.5M.
 - Within those losses, UTMB has seen a significant decrease in patient care revenue due to the delay and cancellation of non-essential procedures. As of August, UTMB is projecting \$117.7M in lost patient care revenue and to-date UTMB has received \$62.3M in federal CARES Act funding to help off-set those losses. UTMB is projecting a remaining loss of \$55.4M due to patient care revenue losses.
 - Additionally, expenses (such as PPE and construction associated with social distancing and air handling) have increased due to our COVID-19 response. Also included in the total estimate, is a projected \$35.6M in COVID related increased expenses. FEMA and other external funding will cover a portion of this response, leaving approximately \$24.1M in uncovered increased expenses.

8. How has the pandemic affected the overall financial status of small and rural community colleges?

- NA

9. Does your institution have a public, online dashboard for the reporting of positive COVID-19 cases which is updated daily? If so, what is the link to the dashboard?

- Currently, UTMB does not publicly post positive COVID-19 cases. UTMB works very closely with the Galveston County Health District and their website provides the public information related to positive cases (including UTMB) throughout the county. UTMB also reports testing data to the Texas Medical Center (TMC), the Southeast Texas Regional Advisory Council (SETRAC) and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS).